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ABSTRACT

The career guidance component of the Mississippi State University/West Point Enrichment Project involved three sessions: self-inventory, career exploration, and personal development guidance counseling. The career guidance component was developed to provide at-risk adolescents with the experience of career exploration and information about themselves and the world of work as it relates to education and life. Two instruments were used to assess individual interests and personality traits: the Holland Self-Directed Search, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Career exploration was facilitated through use of the computer program Choices by Careerware. The personal development guidance counseling components consisted of 3 individual 20-minute sessions handled by 16 graduate students who acted as counselors for at least 3 students each. The career guidance component served as a builder of self-esteem and an awareness of relationship to others. It also illustrated the student's part in the picture of life and the world of work. Many students realized how varied their interests were. Most important, students saw the relationship of education to salary and jobs through their investigations. They also realized that their likes, interests, skills, and capabilities were important in choosing a career. They learned about occupations they had not heard of before and discovered more detailed information on careers that they knew about. (Contains 10 references.) (KC)

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# CAREER GUIDANCE AND THE ADOLESCENT

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association

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The career guidance component of the Mississippi State University/West Point Enrichment Project involved three sessions: Self Inventory, Career Exploration, and Personal Development Guidance Counseling. Dr. Joe Ray Underwood, Professor of Psychology and Counseling at Mississippi State, designed and directed this component of the project.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the component was to provide at-risk adolescents with the experience of career exploration and information about themselves and the world of work as it relates to education and life.

Rationale

Since Kaplan (1993) reports that students began thinking about vocational futures long before high school, they should be provided the opportunity for self awareness and information to assist in exploring and expanding new horizons of occupations and careers.

There is a need to link individual interests and capabilities with occupational and career choices. This need is essential to provide focus and direction for educational, as well as, occupational plans for at-risk students.

According to Erikson, children must start making decisions regarding their vocational and personal future during adolescence (Kaplan, 1993). This is the time when students become more aware of self, likes, dislikes, skills, and capabilities in order to develop their own sense of individuality. Lain & Laramore (1991) stated that rather than worrying about what parents and peers consider prestigious, students will be more fulfilled and probably more successful with choices based own their own interests, goals and values.

According to Atkinson and Murrell (1988), career exploration, the process of generating and assimilating career information relating to self and the world of work has long been recognized as an integral element in reaching a career decision. Career choice is an adequate function when self knowledge and occupational knowledge are combined, therefore, the more information the individual has about each, the more adequate the choice (Osipow, 1983). Making a career choice is not a once-in-a-lifetime decision. Statistics show that the average person changes jobs three times and works for ten different employers in a lifetime. It is important to allow yourself the freedom to change and grow.

Involving at-risk adolescents in career exploration also involves them in a learning process. Students may learn a strategy that they can apply continually to enhance their personal and professional lives,since learning and career development are both lifelong pursuits (Atkinson and Murrell, 1988). Many school districts recognize that student dropouts are a problem and requires bold new approaches. Because the problem is such a complicated one, the solution may require a variety of programs and approaches. Some school districts have instituted promising programs in which potential dropouts attend alternative schools or work-study programs and receive more attention and tutoring in basic academic skills (Kaplan, 1993). Raupp and Cohen (1992) believe that volunteer community involvement increases empathy, self esteem and commitment to community. The success of students in school and in life is a product of learning conditions that include teachers that genuinely care about their students, a life-centered curriculum and the opportunity for students to resolve their problems that emerge (Benedict, 1992). One of the suggestions from the 1989 Carnegie Report entitled, "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st

Century", recommended connecting the school with the community through service opportunities and establishing partnerships with community organizations as a needed change (Kaplan, 1993).

Therefore, the literature suggest there is a need for schools to address the exploration of careers with at-risk students to raise their level of awareness of various occupations in the community and their self-esteem.

Description

The first segment of the career guidance component dealt with developing self-inventory and career exploration. These activities provided hands-on activities of self assessments and career searches. The first activity of this segment was devoted to self analyses. Students were divided into two groups of approximately 25 students. Each group participated in two activites and each activity lasted for an hour and 30 minutes. There were two instruments used to assess individual interests and personality traits: The Holland Self-Directed Search (SDS) and The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Students were seated in an auditorium and the instructor explained the instruments and answered

questions. The MBTI was given first and students were allowd a short break before the SDS was administered. It took approximately 35 minutes to administer each instrument. The at-risk adolescents were brought to the Mississippi State University Campus to take two inventories.

The second activity was career exploration. The computer program Choices by Careerware was used. Students were given the Choices booklet to indicate their preferences in education, work site, physical demands, temperaments, earning, aptitudes, interests, future outlook, field of work, physical activities, hours of work, and environment. These selections were entered into the computer and a profile sheet was generated, which listed the various careers that matched the selected choices of the students. A specific job exploration and description was printed when the student selected a particular job. Some students selected more than one specified job and had several printouts of job descriptions.

The second segment of the career guidance activity, personal development and career counseling, was held on the West Point Junior High School campus. Graduate

psychology and counselor education students scored the inventories, interpreted the results and compiled an individualized, personal/career profile sheet for each student. There were sixteen counselors who were responsible for at least three students each. The counselors met with each student and explained the results, answered questions, and re-emphasized to the students that career exploration is a continuous learning process. The individual sessions lasted about twenty minutes each.

Qualitative Data and Data Analysis

The Holland Self-Directed Search is a vocational interest inventory which loosely classifies people and occupations into six different groups. They include Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. On the Self-Directed Search, students were asked to list some occupational day dreams, state preferences for certain activities, indicate personal competencies, and estimate abilities in specific areas. The responses to the inventory were then summarized and a specific code was identified. Under each code, there was a summary list of occupations for students to explore. The students also had the options of viewing

the occupations under variations of their codes. For example, if a student's code was IRA, the student viewed and explored the occupations under the variation codes RAI, AIR, ARI, IAR and RIA. The purpose of the inventory was to give the students a better idea of how they viewed parts of themselves that are important in the decision making process. The search also helped students to focus on their interests and discover that they may want to explore further.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a 126-item personality inventory which classifies people on four different personality scales: Extraversion (3) or Introversion (I), Sensing (S) or Intuition (N), Thinking (T) or Feeling (F), and Judging (J) or Perceiving (P). Students had to respond to questions about their perceptions of the world and how they made decisions. From these responses a summary profile was compiled for the students providing each one of them with a personality trait description of themselves. By providing students with some understanding of their personality, it is hoped that they will get a better understanding of what career choices may be right for them.

The Choices Program helps students examine career opportunities that are available to them. It is a computerized version where students were asked to choose things that are important to them in a career such as educational training, work site, salary etc. Based on the decisions made, Choices provided a focus list of occupations that would be suitable to that student.

In the Self-Directed Search, the groups's overall preferences from the summary codes are R-A-S/E, Realistic, Artistic, Social/Enterprising. This meant that the group summarized themselves as being more realistic-being genuine, honest, materialistic and practical; more artistic - being more imaginable and idealist; and more social/enterprising-being cooperative, friendly, helpful/energetic and adventurous.

The Myers-Briggs Indicator is the student's personality profile. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the students appear to be sensing (S), meaning they acquire information by using sensing functions such as eyes, ears, and other senses to assess what is actually there. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the students are Ts, meaning the way they decide is through thinking. People with a preference for thinking seek an objective standard

of truth. Sixty-three percent (63%) are Ps, meaning they are oriented to the outer world by being flexible and keeping options opens. Fifty percent (50%) of the group are introversion and fifty percent (50%) extraversion.

During the Choices investigations, varied occupations surfaced from each student's own personalized computerized job list. Some of the occupations were new to the student and some were not. It appeared that most of the students selected familiar jobs to get a detailed printout. However, during the sessions with the counselors, the students chose unfamilar or new jobs and they were viewed on the computer screen.

The results of the assessment instruments only reflect the interest of the students at the time the instruments were given. Many factors should be considered when choosing a career. When one learns an inclusive method that considers individual interests, skills, likes dislikes and capabilities, as well as school and community needs, one has learned a life skill that is vital in the world of work.

A summary of the inventories is presented below in a chart. Subjects represent the number of students that took the inventories and the personality assessment. The

letters under the Self-Directed heading indicate the summary code for the group of occupations that are similar to the student's preferences. The occupations listed under Choices headings are the occupations selected by the student to investigate. It appears that the occupations chosen by the males are typically traditional jobs for men. The same applies for the females, except for the female engineer and administrative selections.

| Subj | Gender | Self Directed | Myers Briggs | Choices |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | M | ERI | ENTJ | Reporter, Sales agent |
| 2 | F | RIA | ESFP | Designer, Teacher |
| 3 | M | RSC | ESTP | Architect, Lawyer |
| 4 | M | ERS | ESTP | Sales, Construction |
| 5 | F | RAC | ISTP | Teacher, Postal Clerk |
| 6 | F | RAS | ISFP | Insurance Processor |
| 7 | M | SIC | ESTP | Biological, Engineer |
| 8 | M | RSA | ISTP | Automobile Mechanic |
| 9 | M | RSE | ESTP | Police/Artillery Officer |
| 10 | M | AEC | ESFJ | Truck Driver |
| 11 | F | SAI | ESFP | Social Worker/Admin. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | M | AIR | ISTP | * |
| 13 | F | ECI | ESFJ | Secretary/Banker |
| 14 | M | RIA | INTP | Admin./Journalist |
| 15 | M | RIE | ISTP | Mechanic/Military |
| 16 | M | ESA | ISTP | Zoologist/Admin. |
| 17 | M | EAC | ESTJ | Machine Operator |
| 18 | M | RIA/E | ISTJ | Chemical Engineer<br>Police Detective |
| 19 | F | ASE | ESTJ | Musician/Model |
| 20 | F | SRE | ESFP | Newscaster/Travel |
| 21 | M | AIR | ISTP | Dentist/Judge |
| 22 | M | REC | ESTP | Engineer/Dentist |
| 23 | M | ERS | ISTJ | Farmer |
| 24 | M | RCI | ISTP | Carpenter/Mechanic |
| 25 | F | SAC | ISTJ | Nurse/Cosmetologist |
| 26 | F | SEI | ESTJ | Manager/hospital<br>Director |
| 27 | F | SEC | ENFJ | Teacher/Psychologist |
| 28 | M | CER | ISTP | * |
| 29 | M | IRA | ESTJ | Reporter/Announcer |
| 30 | M | ECA | ISFP | Consultant/Real Estate |
| 31 | M | AEC | ISTP | Aquatic Facility Mgr.<br>Camp Director |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 32 | F | ASE | ESTP | Architectural Drafter<br>Structural Engineer |
| 33 | M | ASI | ESTP | Marine Biologist<br>Military |
| 34 | M | * | * | Military |
| 35 | M | RES | ESTJ | Carpenter/Military |
| 36 | M | IRS | INTJ | Marine/Naval<br>Lawyer |
| 37 | F | SEC | ISTJ | Nurse/Childcare Aide |
| 38 | M | RIS | ISTP | Instrumental Tech./<br>Electrical Engineer |
| 39 | F | ARS | ESTP | Artist/Sculptor |
| 40 | M | RE/CA | ISTP | Emergency Dispatcher<br>Police Supervisor |
| 41 | M | R/CAI | ESTP | Funeral Director |
| 42 | M | RES | ISTJ | Civil Engineer/<br>Chemical Engineer |
| 43 | F | SRE | ESFP | Social Worker/<br>Childcare Worker |
| 44 | F | ASE | ESTJ | Musician/Model |
| 45 | M | AIR | ISTP | Engineer/Mathematics |
| 46 | M | RIA | ISTJ | Military Police/<br>Private Investigator |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 47 | M | AEC | ESFJ | Heavy Truck Driver |
| 48 | M | RSC | ESTP | Police Patrol Officer<br>Military Recruit<br>Officer |
| 49 | M | RSA | ISTP | Mechanic/Military |
| 50 | M | AIR | ISTP | Auto Body Repair |
| 51 | M | * | * | Drafter/Lawyer |
| 52 | F | SAI | ESFP | * |
| 53 | F | ECI | ESFP | Secretary |
| 54 | M | AIR | ISTP | Lawyer<br>Professional Athlete |

Several observations were made during the counselor-student interactions that were pertinent to this component:

Counselor-Student Dialogue

Session 1

This session was a one to one counselor student dialogue at the West Point Junior High School library. The counselor sat across the table from the student.

Counselor: Jason, this report has been written to share with you and your parents the results of our career counseling sessions. In the future, you may be interested in aring this information

*Indicates that students missed a session.

with other professionals such as your teachers, school counselors, and tutors. However, the report is primarily intended for your own use.

Student: How did I do?

Counselor: We met on June 14 and you took the Self-Directed Search that indicated your summary code as RSA. R stands for realistic which means you enjoy skilled trades and things that are real to you. I stands for investigative which means you enjoy activities that use mathematical and scientific abilities, you are precise, intellectual, and independent. S means you interact with people, you are cooperative and friendly, A means you are artistic and interested in creative and enjoy music, art, writing, etc. "It is important to keep in mind that the Self-Directed Search is a tool meant to help you focus on your interest and discover careers that you may want to explore further.
These are some of the occupations that are listed under your code: Composer, speech therapist, stage technician, teacher, counselor, painter.

Student: What is a technician?

Counselor: A technician is a person who is skilled in some profession. A stage technician is a person who arranges and directs exhibits and lighting for stage plays.

You will be able to keep this list so that you can investigate other occupations you might be interested in. Now, let's look at your Myers-Briggs Indicator. According to the Myers-Briggs, you are "ESTP". The "E" stands for extraversion indicating you relate to people & things more easily than you might relate to ideas, "S" stand s for

Sensing which means that you probably prefer working with known facts rather than looking for possibilities and relationships. The "T" for thinking means you tend to base your decisions on logic and on objective analysis of cause and effect. "P" stands for perceiving which means you probably prefer a more flexible way of life; you are always open to suggestions. ESTPs are outstanding as initiators of enterprises that bring people together. Charm radiates from them. They are witty, clever, and fun to be around.

Does this description remind you of yourself?

Student: (Smiling) Well, yeah, I know I like to be around people and I know I like to have reasons why I have to do things.

Counselor: For Choices you selected printouts on art teacher and fashion designer.

Look over this print out. For education as a fashion designer, you will need from 2 to 4 years of educational/vocational training.

Student: I don't want to go to school that long. I thought all I needed to do was to be able to draw and design the fashions.

Counselor: Well, that's partially true, but you see here that it requires more formal training especially if you are going to be working for an agency.

Student: How much money do they pay?

Counselor: Depending on education and experience, you can earn from $13,000 to $32,999.

Student: My uncle makes more money than that,

Counselor: What does he do?

Student: He works for Armour meat company and he makes $300 a week.

Counselor: That's good! but he doesn't make more than, what you can earn according to the information given here. It says you can earn up to from $13,000 to $32,999. Your uncle does make more than $13,000 but if you were being paid $32,999 you would be making around $650.00 a week.

Session 2
(This student was observed talking to another counselor)

Student: This has been a good session. I found out that I can make $50,000 a year. If I had known, I would've been coming to school everyday so I can hurry up and get out of here.

Counselor: That's great! What are you going to do?

Student: I am going to be a mechanic for heavy trucks. I already work with my uncle part-time fixing cars but I didn't know you could make that much money fixing cars.

Counselor: Are you going to study auto mechanics in high school?

Student: Yes, then I'm going to the service and specialize on working with tanks and trucks.

Counselor: That's great!

Session Three

Student: I don't have to worry about this stuff because I am going to play professional basketball.

Counselor: And what will happen if you don't make

it.

Student: I'ma make it. That sheet said a professional athlete can make $100,000 with just a high school education.

Counselor: That is true but the odds are one out of thousands who really make it. Many student athletes have had the same dream. In order to become a professional athlete, it takes years of training plus highly skilled ability. Are you playing on the basketball team now?

Student: No, I'm going to play next year.

Counselor: Okay, it will be a good idea just to explore all the options you have available to you now in case something happens to cause you to change your mind. People usually change their minds three to four times during a career.

Student: (Looking down at his printout sheet) Alright, (pauses), what is "Aquatic facility"?

Counselor: Let's pull it up on the computer and see.

The researcher's interpretation and conclusions from the observations are summarized in the following paragraphs.

In session one the student appeared to have gained information about an occupation that was unfamiliar or unknown to her. The student appeared to have felt better about herself as she learned more about her personality. She was also shown salary realities. It prepared she had not really thought about salary in a real sense of

dollars and cents per day or week.

Discovering the connection of education and training to salary and a reason or purpose for learning was the result in this particular session. The student appeared to have been excited to know that he could actually get high pay for something he was already learing about in the community with his uncle.

Session three observed the student experiencing the importance of exploring options for now and later. The student was also exposed to new information about occupations.

Conclusion

The activity served as a builder of self-esteem and an awareness of relationship to others. It also illustrated the student's part in the picture of life and the world of work. Many students realized how varied their ineresting were. This was evidenced in the contradictions of occupations that were produced, then compared with the two inventories, Self-Directed Search and Choices. Most importantly, students saw the relationship of education to salary and jobs through their investigations. They also realized that their likes, interests, as well as, their skills and

capabilities were important in choosing a career. Many learned about occupations they had not heard of before and discovered more detailed information on careers that they knew about. They also learned that career exploration is a continuous process.

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